



Examples of Innovative Teaching Techniques Submitted by Faculty in Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts

Professor Michael Malone:

1. Active Learning Collaboration with Oral Report

I break students into small groups. I give them a problem to solve together related to an event, theme, interpretation or issue found in the transformative text. Students must work together collaboratively to solve the problem. They may use technology such as cell phones and laptops to look up information that may be useful. Then they put away all devices and discuss potential solutions. Once they have agreed on a response to the problem, the small group (5-6 students) prepares a brief oral report which they deliver to the class as a whole. Once each group has reported its response, the whole class in a circle discusses the problem/question informally in a free-flowing discussion.

2. Self-Reflection Writing Activity with Sharing by Mutual Invitation

Students are given a writing prompt that requires them to reflect on their own life experiences. (Example: "Franz Kafka's central character Gregor experienced alienation and exploitation from those around him. In *Metamorphosis*, Gregor is transformed into an insect to symbolize his experience of alienation. Based on your life experiences so far, what animal or creature would you choose to transform into if you were writing *Metamorphosis*? Explain why you selected this animal or creature.") Students are only given 15-20 minutes to compose a paragraph responding to the writing prompt. We form a large class circle, and I then invite one student to share his or her paragraph with the class. When this student has shared, anyone may comment or react to the paragraph. Then the student who shared invites another student to share her paragraph with the class. We continue with the invitations until time has expired. If a student is invited to share but feels uncomfortable doing so, he does not have to read his paragraph. He must still however invite another student to share in the class circle.

3. Quotes to Affirm or Challenge

I find key quotes from the transformational text and copy them on slips of paper. The quotes should be significant, controversial, or in some way central to the appreciation of the text. I then place them in a cup or jar. I break the class into small group stations of 5-6

students each. Each station has a cup or jar. A student draws one of the quotes from the jar and reads it to her group. She then either affirms the quote and explains why or she challenges the quote and explains why. Others may then react to the quotation. A different student then draws another quote and repeats the process. Each student takes a turn until all the quotes are shared. All the stations have the same 5 or 6 quotations. In the last 15-20 minutes, the class comes together in a large circle and students may share their reaction to the quotes in a large group discussion. (A variation I have used on this activity is to have the students find a significant quote and copy it onto a piece of paper. They form small groups and the groups exchange their quotes. These quotes then become the content for discussion.)

4. Group-Directed Large Class Discussion on Student-Generated Essential Questions

After completing a reading assignment, I ask students to take out a notebook or piece of paper. I ask each to write down one (and only one) question they believe is essential to really understanding the meaning of the transformational text. The question may not be a factual question but must be an open-ended question involving interpretation or opinion. I break the class into small groups of 5-6 students. Each student shares his or her question with the group. After a short period of discussion, the group selects the one essential question it believes is the best one for discussion of the text. The group then writes this question on the white board. After each group has put its question on the board, the class forms a large discussion circle (group members remain near each other in the circle). A member of one group reads her group's question from the white board. The group is then in charge of facilitating the class discussion on its question. After discussion on the essential question is done, the next group directs the discussion on its essential question. We go around the room until each group has asked its question and has had an opportunity to direct the class discussion.

Professor Lindsay Hamm:

5. "Getting to Know You"

At the beginning of the semester, I always ask my students to fill out a "getting to know you sheet." At the bottom of the sheet this semester, I told them that one thing we do in SCLA 102 is "tackle the big questions." I asked them to give me a big question (like "what is the meaning of life") they would like to discuss with their peers, explaining that I was going to put them in a container and pull them out randomly during class. I really do have this container in my bag every day and have pulled it out a few times during lulls in the conversation. We've had some really interesting discussions!

Professor Jody Watkins:

6. Greek-style tragedy plays

In conjunction with having students read a tragedy play (*Oedipus the King* or *Medea* usually), I divide students into small groups and have them create and perform their own

Greek-style tragedy plays. They incorporate the characteristics of tragedy spelled out by Aristotle in *Poetics*. In the spirit of the Festival of Dionysus, we have a little competition and declare a winner with some inexpensive prizes. They just concluded, and while some plays were on more traditional or timeless themes, others brought in subjects such as COVID, the dangers of technology (featuring Amazon's Alexa device), the downfall of someone who became a star on TikTok, and a same-sex relationship between an IU football player and a Purdue football player that went more full-on Shakespearean than ancient Greek tragedy at the end - I was just glad that they did not play the same-sex relationship for laughs.

6. Role Playing with *The Inferno*

When I do read *Inferno*, I have them write a role play paper in which they make a commentary on their own times by coming up with a contemporary hell, much like Dante's hell was influenced at least partly by his time and place. They come up with some creative approaches to this assignment, and some have made a point to tell me that they really enjoyed writing it, something I don't hear about research papers for some reason.

Professor Bill White:

7. The Hollywood Pitch

I invite Mr. Frederick Douglass into the classroom (I am the stand in) after we have finished his *Narrative*/autobiography. Each group must "Hollywood pitch" Mr. Douglass on what they would include from his book in a made-for-TV 90-minute story of his life. They cannot tell every story in the book so they must "guess" which stories he deems most important and why. They also must explain to him the tone of the show and what they hope America in 2022 takes from it.

Professor M. Zook:

8. Final Research Project Paper for SCLA 101

The final research paper in SCLA 101 asks students to create something new and innovative such as the design for a new video game, a graphic short story, or even a consumer product that is inspired by one or more of their transformative texts. Their paper is designed as a pitch to investors or executives who might sponsor their product. Students must have a full understanding of the texts that inspire their product as well as the supporting data on their audience, market, and competition.

Sample topics:

- Designing a video game [for example, combine ideas from *The Road* and the *Inferno*]
- Creating a new guide to happiness based on the ideas in *Candide* and *Siddhartha*
- Designing graphic short story [for example, based on two or more of Dante's adventures in *Inferno*; or Macbeth's encounters with the weird sisters]
- Creating an action or animated film [*any of our readings would work*]

- The design for a new theatrical interpretation [*Macbeth* or *Candide*]
- A new podcast series based on transformative texts

Professor Claire Mason

9. Final Oral Presentation for SCLA 102

Like the above project for 101, Professor Mason has her students pitch an adaptation of any of the transformative texts read that semester. Their pitch must contain:

1. Six Sentence Argument for your product
2. The reasoning for your adaptation
3. Why this is a transformative text
4. Ethical implications of your product
5. The projected cost of implementation
6. Demographics and projected interest
7. Evidence of feasibility

They then hold a poster session where they have to garner as many investors as possible within a twenty-minute period. They incorporate the feedback from the poster session into their final submission (a sample or prototype of the product).

Professor Tulin Tosun:

10. **Tiny Love Stories (based on the *New York Times* column):** Students will write a 100-word love story based on a text [like *Pride and Prejudice*] or from their own life and add a picture.

Samples from the NY Times:

'I Can't Believe You Heard Me' by *Allie Ceccola*

Three days into my coronavirus hellscape: It was 2 a.m. My sweet, sleep-deprived husband dozed in the living room of our Brooklyn apartment while I writhed in pain in our bed. As my temperature crept past 102 degrees, I couldn't find the strength to get up for a cold compress. I called his name, hoping he was awake. I heard the floor creak under his footsteps. Relief washed over me. "I can't believe you heard me," I said. "Actually, I didn't," he said. "The dog heard you." My knights in shining armor.



My husband and our dog would regularly peek through the door to check on me while I was in quarantine.

Boys, Bikinis and Cubed Fruit — *Maggie Chen*

I grew up with bowls of cut fruit — soft mangoes, vibrant dragon fruit. In our Chinese-American household, my parents chopped up big issues to make them easier for us to swallow. Misunderstandings sometimes led to raised voices — arguments fueled by generational divides, boys, bikinis, teenage selfishness. Sometimes misunderstandings led to silence. But there was always a bowl of cut fruit waiting. No problem, no question was too big to be sliced apart to eventually reach a core of understanding. Amid the cultural complexities of our Asian immigrant family, love is unspoken but unconditional in a bowl of neatly cubed apples.



Mangoes and dragon fruit, sliced.

A Dual Diagnosis by *Amanda Cissner*

Sitting behind the one-way mirror as our child performed for a series of clinicians, we answered questions from psychiatrists, physicians, therapists. Eventually, the diagnosis: Our child is autistic. As this sunk in, a second, more surprising revelation: My husband is autistic. A lifetime of quirks and misunderstanding contextualized. Now, when I grow exasperated with his brusqueness, his laser focus on idiosyncratic interests, the chaotic disarray of paperwork in his wake, I think of all the love and acceptance that I hope our child finds in the world. And it is a little easier to extend that love to them both.



Superhero and his dad take a walk through the woods.